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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2010 to March 2011

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 65/116, provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Unless otherwise stated, it covers the period from April 2010 to March 2011.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 65/116, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, to that end, requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat through the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions to seek new and innovative ways to disseminate material to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraphs 4 and 5, the Assembly also requested the Department to continue its efforts to update web-based information on the assistance programmes available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, together with the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization.

2. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2010 to March 2011.

II. Fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

3. In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption, on 14 December 1960, of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the Department provided communications support to the Department of Political Affairs to raise awareness and disseminate information about the work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization. The Department's contribution to the promotion of the commemorative event, which was held in the General Assembly Hall on 14 December 2010, included:

(a) Issuance of a press kit that was made available ahead of the commemorative event;

(b) Screening of documentary video footage related to General Assembly sessions on decolonization during the 1960s. Several television monitors were placed throughout United Nations Headquarters to screen the footage;

(c) Display of a slide in the public tour area on the Organization's role in decolonization, which helped to raise visitors' awareness of the commemorative event;

(d) Publication of special features and news stories in the United Nations News Centre on the United Nations website and on the Secretariat's Intranet platforms for staff and delegates.

III. 2010 Pacific regional seminar on decolonization, New Caledonia

4. The Special Committee held its 2010 annual regional seminar in Noumea from 18 to 20 May. The seminar, hosted by the Territorial Government of New Caledonia in concurrence with France as the administering Power and conducted within the framework of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010), marked both the end of the Second International Decade and the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

5. The Department arranged for the deployment of a press officer from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Australia to cover the seminar. It issued four press releases, which were carried by the Department's meetings coverage services and shared with the network of United Nations information centres for local dissemination. A message issued by the Secretary-General on the occasion was also widely disseminated.

IV. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

Services to the media

6. During the reporting period, the Department's press service issued a total of 43 press releases on decolonization in English and French, covering meetings, statements and hearings by various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly (Special Political and Decolonization Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

7. Issues pertaining to the Organization's work in the area of decolonization were a consistent focus of news stories produced by the United Nations News Service, one of the most frequently visited segments of the www.un.org website. Over the course of the reporting period, United Nations news articles were also distributed via RSS feeds to news aggregators, via e-mail to tens of thousands of subscribers worldwide, and through Facebook and Twitter, reaching some 20,000 fans.

United Nations Television

8. United Nations Television covered the meeting between the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina on the situation of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) held at United Nations Headquarters on 24 February 2010. It was fed live to the Department's television clients and used in a UNifeed story and in the daily United Nations highlights package. United Nations Webcast covered seven events relating to the issue of decolonization, representing 11 hours of live and archived video. These included the first organizational meeting of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples on 24 February 2011 and the reports of the Fourth Committee.

United Nations Radio

9. United Nations Radio continued to cover decolonization matters, which formed a significant part of the content of its English regional news magazine "Caribbean News Round-up". In February 2011, considerable coverage was given to the statement of the Secretary-General that the continued existence of colonial situations was completely outdated and must be addressed. The Secretary-General cited the case of the 16 so-called "non-self-governing territories", including Bermuda and Guam, as well as Western Sahara.

10. United Nations Radio provided coverage of meetings, using audio clips of statements by members of the Special Committee as well as petitioners, in addition to meetings of the Fourth Committee. Coverage included work on Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United States Virgin Islands and the Pacific islands of American Samoa, Pitcairn and Tokelau. There was also some coverage of the Falklands Islands (Malvinas) and Gibraltar in the Committees. Coverage of Western Sahara included action in the Security Council and efforts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

V. Visitors services

11. The topic of decolonization, including the roles of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee, was regularly included in the narrative of the guided tours of United Nations Headquarters provided by the Department. The maps and text on decolonization, both of which were updated and reprinted in early 2011 to incorporate the most up-to-date information and to make them easier to read, assisted the guides in explaining to the visitors the historical process of decolonization, as well as the locations of the current Non-Self-Governing Territories. There are now two sets of decolonization maps on the tour route so that they can be used by more guides at the same time.

VI. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

12. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides research and information services on decolonization and related issues on an ongoing basis. During the reporting period, the Library handled an increased demand for research and information services on this topic because a high number of countries, especially in Africa, were celebrating and commemorating their fiftieth or sixtieth independence anniversaries. Requests came mainly from delegates, staff and scholars, who wished to make effective use of the rich documentary archives of the Organization, including landmark speeches, treaties, maps, Trusteeship Council reports and other relevant information sources.

13. Through its ongoing digitalization programme, the Library also continued to digitize and post important older documents to the Official Document System, to ensure that an increasing number of these important records on decolonization were accessible through the Internet, while also ensuring the preservation of the original copies.

VII. United Nations publications

14. In March 2011, the Department published volume 61 (2007) of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, which provides comprehensive coverage of the concerns and activities of the United Nations, including decolonization. The volume covers the work of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee as well as general decolonization issues and the situation of individual Non-Self-Governing Territories.

15. The Department also prepared a revised edition of the handbook *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, to be published in May 2011, which features an entire chapter, with accompanying appendices, documenting the history of the contributions of the United Nations to decolonization up to the present day.

VIII. United Nations information centres and services

16. The network of United Nations information centres continued to disseminate information about decolonization and promote the work of the Fourth Committee, often in local languages, among students, civil society and the media.

(a) The United Nations Information Centre in Canberra, in conjunction with the regional UNHCR office, provided communications support to the Special Committee at its 2010 annual regional seminar in Noumea. Activities included providing a record of the Committee sessions, drafting, editing and sending daily media releases and liaising with local and international media to publicize the seminar and arrange press interviews with the Chair. Support also included assisting in drafting and editing recommendations for the final report as well as general administration and liaison with United Nations staff and host country officials;

(b) The United Nations Information Service in Geneva issued press releases on the work of the Human Rights Council and other human rights treaty bodies and experts that touched on the effects of colonization and decolonization in the context of country reviews. Themes related to decolonization were also addressed during the Service's news briefings held twice a week. Decolonization and the role of the Trusteeship Council in the decolonization process were included in the Service's guided tours of the Palais des Nations, as well as in the information programmes organized for visiting groups. Approximately 95,000 visitors took the guided tour in 2010;

(c) The United Nations Information Service in Vienna addressed the issue of decolonization in its briefing and guided tour programmes for visiting students and the public. In 2010, well over 48,500 people took guided tours in Vienna.

IX. Conclusions

17. As the public voice of the Organization, the Department of Public Information continues to disseminate information about decolonization. Using traditional as well as new information and communications technologies, it continues to stress the need for immediate and full implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The work of the Special Committee, which remains the intergovernmental body exclusively devoted to

advancing the United Nations decolonization agenda, remains at the centre of the Department's outreach activities with media, civil society and educational institutions.